

Message Text

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15

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7267

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

UNCLAS CANBERRA 0294

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, XO, AS

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER FRASER ON INDIAN OCEAN

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE MELBOURNE AGE ON JANUARY 14, 1976: QTE U.S. WELCOME AT NEW BASE: FRASER.

2. QTE AUSTRALIA'S NEW DOLS 50 MILLION COCKBURN SOUND NAVAL BASE WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

3. QTE AUSTRALIA ALREADY HAD AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE UNITED STATES THAT THE BASE WOULD HELP TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. FRASER, SAID IN A STATEMENT YESTERDAY.

4. QTE THE BASE, SOUTH OF FREMANTLE, IS DUE TO BE UNCLASSIFIED

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COMPLETED BY 1978.

5. QTE A FORMER PRIME MINISTER, MR. GORTON, ORDERED ITS CONSTRUCTION SIX YEARS AGO.

6. QTE THE BASE, WITH FACILITIES TO MAINTAIN AND REFUEL DESTROYERS AND SUBMARINES, WILL BE THE WESTERN POWERS' THIRD MOST IMPORTANT BASE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AFTER SIMONSTOWN IN SOUTH AFRICA AND DIEGO GARCIA ISLAND.

7. QTE MR. FRASER YESTERDAY BACKED A U.S. BUILD-UP OF NAVAL FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIEGO GARCIA.

8. QTE HE SAID THE SOVIET BUILD-UP WOULD HAVE TO BE REDUCED SUBSTANTIALLY BEFORE IT REACHED THE SAME LEVEL AS THE U.S., AND ADDED: INNER QTE THE PROSPECTS OF THE SOVIET UNION REDUCING ITS LEVEL OF ACTIVITY...ARE VERY REMOTE. END INNER QTE

9. QTE MR. FRASER SAID: INNER QTE WHEN I WAS DEFENCE MINISTER I HAD AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE U.S. SECRETARY OF DEFENCE AND WITH THE BRITISH SECRETARY OF DEFENCE THAT COCKBURN SOUND, WHEN DEVELOPED, COULD BE USED FROM TIME TO TIME.

10. QTE WE HOPED THAT IT WOULD BE USED AND THAT IT WOULD HELP IN MAINTAINING THE BALANCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. END INNER QTE.

11. QTE MR. FRASER SAID THE COALITION HAS SUPPORTED THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIEGO GARCIA SINCE IT WAS FIRST SUGGESTED.

12. QTE MR. FRASER DISCOUNTED THE POSSIBILITY OF AUSTRALIA BEING INVOLVED IN AN INDIAN OCEAN DEFENCE PACT WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND THE U.S.

13. INNER QTE I DON'T THINK AUSTRALIA HAS THE FORCES THAT WOULD ENABLE THAT TO TAKE PLACE, END INNER QTE HE SAID.

14. QTE THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PLACE A PRIORITY ON BUILDING UNCLASSIFIED

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UP AUSTRALIA'S NAVAL RESERVES TO BOLSTER SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES.

15. INNER QTE THIS IS A MATTER THE DEFENCE MINISTER HAS UNDER CONSIDERATION AT THE MOMENT.

16. QTE WE DO BELIEVE THE ESCORT CAPACITY OF THE NAVY NEEDS INCREASING AND I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE DEPARTMENT

OF DEFENCE IS EXAMINING THIS. END INNER QTE. END QTE.
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